

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6013
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 4099

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SGEN, EAID,LELAB, PEPR, PORG, JO
ZSUBJECT: ECWA CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

REF: A. STATE 109897, B. AMMAN 3684

1. EMBASSY HAS DISCUSSED ISSUES RAISED REFTEL WITH IN'AM MUFTI, GOJ CONFERENCE COORDINATOR, AND CHAIRMAN OF CONFERENCE PREPARATORY MEETING HELD IN AMMAN APRIL 22-24. PLO REPS ATTENDED PREPARATORY MEETING AND PLAN ATTEND MAY 30-JUNE 4 CONFERENCE. MRS MUFTI, WITH SOME SATISFACTION, REPORTS THAT SHE WAS ABLE TO HEAD OFF "POLITICAL SLOGANEERING" OF PLO REP AT VERY BEGINNING OF PREPARATORY MEETING BY INSISTING THAT CONFEREES STICK TO SUBSTANCE OF CONFERENCE, I.E., WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT. PARTICIPANTS READILY ACCEPTED HER POINT AND, SHE BELIEVES, WERE SOMEWHAT RELIEVED, FOR ONCE, TO LEAVE ASIDE WHAT HAD BECOME OBLIGATORY INJECTION OF ME QUESTION INTO ANY INTERNATIONAL GATHERING. NEITHER PLO REPS NOR OTHER ARAB DELEGATES MADE SECOND ATTEMPT TO INTRODUCE POLITICAL ISSUES INTO MEETING. THERE IS OF COURSE NO ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE THAT CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN WILL BE EQUALLY SUCCESSFUL IN STEERING PARTICIPANTS AWAY FROM TEMPTATION TO INJECT
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POLITICS INTO CONFERENCE. SUCCESS IN THIS REGARD DEPEPDS LARGELY ON SKILLS OF CHAIRMAN, WHO IS AS YET NOT NAMED. ACCORDING TO MRS MUFTI, TENTATIVE PLANS ARE FOR CROWN PRINCE HASSAN (CONFERENCE'S ROYAL SPONSOR) TO CHAIR TWO OR THREE SESSIONS AND LEAVE REMAINDER TO MRS MUFTI OR TO PRINCESS BASMA -- WITH MRS MUFTI AT HER SIDE TO HELP HER OUT OF "TIGHT SPOTS".

2. FORMAL AGENDA IS BEING DRAWN UP BY ECWA OFFICE IN BEIRUT AND HAS NOT YET BEEN PROVIDED GOJ. (CAN EMBASSY BEIRUT SUPPLY?) HOWEVER, ON BASIS OF PREPARATORY MEETING, MRS MUFTI WAS ABLE T PROVIDE FOLLOWING GENERAL AGENDA: MAJOR TOPIC WILL BE A) FORMULATION OF "PLAN OF ACTION", B) EVALUATION OF PROGRESS OF WOMEN IN THE REGION, AND C) PRESENTATION OF SCHOLARLY PAPERS.

3. PLANS OF ACTION WILL BE DRAWN UP SEPARATELY FOR NATIONAL LEVEL, INTER-REGIONAL LEVEL AND REGIONAL-INTER-NATIONAL LEVEL. NATIONAL LEVEL WILL HAVE EMPHASIS ON RURAL AND BEDU WOMEN AND WILL DISCUSS PLANS TO IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, FAMILY SERVICES, LEGAL RIGHTS, AND THE MEDIA AN ITS EFFECT IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S ROLE IN SOCIETY. INTER-REGIONAL SECTION CONCENTRATES ON THE COOPERATION TO IMPROVE PLIGHT OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. SPECIFIC PROPOSALS INCLUDE: EXTEND ASSIS-TANCE TO WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS TO EDUCATE PALESTINIAN WOMEN, WITH CONCENTRATION ON HEALTH CARE AND NUTRITION; SUPPORT EXISTING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES BY PROVIDING EXPERTS AND FUNDING; EXPAND VOCATIONAL INSTUTIONS FOR WOMEN; INSTITUTE CAMPAIGNS TO ATTRACT MORE STUDENTS TO TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL INSTUTIONS; INCREASE LITERACY PROGRAMS, INVETIGATE WAYS
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TO INCREASE USE OF MEDIA FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES, NEGOTIATE WITH OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES TO LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTATION OF "FORBIDDEN" BOOKS; ASSIST INSTITUTIONS WORKING FOR PRESERVATION OF PALESTINIAN CULTURE; EXTEND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES; COOPERATE WITH UNESCO TO LOOK INTO CRRICULUM FOR PALESTINIAN ARABS; LOBBY ARAB COUNTRIES TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMS; AND ASSIST VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS TO START COOPERATIVES TO MARKET HANDICRAFTS PRODUCED BY PALESTINIAN WOMEN.

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4. AMONG OUTSIDE SPEAKERS INVITED TO PRESENT PAPERS AT CONFERENCE ARE DR. MUNA HAMMAM, PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY OF AMERICAN UN. (UNDER ICA SPONSORSHIP); PERDITA HUSTON, ASPEN INSTITUTE; LIZE SERGIO, MEMBER OF THE BOARD, MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE; A BRITISH MP; A BRITISH PROFESSOR, AND POSSIBLY OTHER WOMEN LEADERS FROM FRANCE AND THE FRG.

5. GIVEN DETAILED PROJECT ORIENTATION OF CONFERENCE AND DETERMINATION OF GOJ CONFERENCE HOSTS THAT IT PRODUCE CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF STATUS OF WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT, WE HOPE BUT HAVE NO ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE THAT CONFERENCE WILL NOT DEGENERATE INTO FORUM FOR UNHELPFUL POLITICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS, DESPITE PRESENCE OF PLO REPS. MAJOR AGENDA ITEMS THAT HAVE POLITICAL CONNOTATIONS ARE FORBIDDEN BOOKS AND CURRICULUM ISSUES, EACH OF WHICH IS CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION BETWEEN GOI AND UNRWA (IP FORMER CASE) AND UNESCO (IN LATTER). THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE ALREADY BEING PURSUED IN APPROPRIATE CHANNELS BUT HAVE YET TO BE RESOLVED; HENCE THEIR INCLUSION IN PLAN OF ACTION. EVEN IF SOME POLITICAL ITEMS ARE DISCUSSED WE ASSUME

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THAT U.S. DELEGATIONS, AS CONFERENCE OBSERVER, CAN AVOID INVOLVEMENT IN SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. GENERAL THEMES OF CONFERENCE COINCIDE WITH SEVERAL AID PROGRAMS AND MISSION GOALS; WE AGREE WITH MRS. MUFTI THAT DR. ADLER AND MS. FRASER CAN PROVIDE VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO PROGRAMS FOR PROMOTION OF STATUS OF WOMEN THROUGH EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH SIMILAR PROGRAMS WITH AID IN OTHER REGIONS. FURTHERMORE, BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT USG DEMONSTRATE ITS SUPPORT FOR GOJ INITIATIVE IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT FIELD, (PARTICULARLY SINCE OTHER U.S. INSTITUTIONS WILL BE PARTICIPATING). RECOMMEND THAT SOME WAY BE FOUND FOR DR. ADLER AND/OR MS. FRASER TO ATTEND

CONFERENCE, AND, IF POSSIBLE, PRESENT PAPER(S) AS
SUGGESTED REF B.

6. EMBASSY FULLY UNDERSTANDS DEPARTMENT'S HESITATION W/ FUNDING AFL-CIO TRAVEL AND IN PASSING ON INVITATION TO AFL-CIO REPS AND AGREES THAT IT IS WISER NOT TO PUT THEM IN POSITION OF HAVING TO SAY NO TO INVITATION.

7. EMBASSY PLANNING HAVE ELIZABETH JONES (POLITICAL OFFICER) AND CAROL STEELE (AID SOCIAL AFFAIRS OFFICER) ATTEND CONFERENCE. AS IN PAST, EMBASSY ASSUMES DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE REGARDING CONTACT WITH PLO REPS AT INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS WILL APPLY; I.E., SOCIAL AMENITIES BUT NO SUBSTANTIVE EXCHANGE.

8. WE ASSUME THAT DEPARTMENT WILL NOT REQUIRE U.S. TO STATE FOR THE RECORD ANY POSITIONS ON PLO OR OTHER MIDEAST ISSUES AT CONFERENCE SESSIONS, SINCE THIS CONFERENCE UNLIKE FULL ECWA CONFERENCE IN MAY 1977 AND DOES NOT INVOLVE NEW PRECEDENTS REGARDING PLO STATUS. SUCH ACTIONS COULD BE DISRUPTIVE OF CONFERENCE; IF SUCH A SITUATION COULD
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ARISE, WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT IT IN ADVANCE AND TAILOR OUR REPRESENTATION ACCORDINGLY. HOWEVER, CONFERENCE IS BEING PLANNED BY GOJ AS A SERIOUS WORKING SEMINAR ON WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT WITH LITTLE EMPHASIS ON FORMAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ASPECTS AND PROCEDURES. WE WOULD LIKE TO APPROACH IT AND SUPPORT GOJ EFFORTS IN THIS SPIRIT. WE BELIEVE IN THIS CASE U.S. SUPPORT FOR

PROGRAMS OF IMPORTANCE TO WOMEN FAR OUTWEIGH ANY LIKELIHOOD OF SERIOUS POLITICAL ENTANGLEMENT WITH THE PLO OR OTHERS AND THAT OUR PARAMOUNT INTERESTS SHOULD THEREFORE DICTATE OUR BEING PRESENT.
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